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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 12 October 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Kemayah, Sr. ..... (Liberia)

Contents

Agenda item 59: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*)*

Agenda item 60: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*)*

Agenda item 62: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)*

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 59: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/73/64 and A/73/23)

Agenda item 60: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/73/23)

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/73/23 and A/73/70)

Agenda item 62: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/73/73)

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) (A/73/23, A/73/70 and A/73/219)

Agenda item 63: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*) (A/73/23, A/73/70 and A/73/219)

Hearing of petitioners (*continued*)

1. **The Chair** said that, following the concerns expressed at the previous meeting regarding the status of petitioners, consultations had been held with the delegations of Morocco, Egypt and Algeria to reassure them that the procedures of the Committee had been not been violated.

2. In accordance with the Committee's usual practice, petitioners would be invited to take a place at the petitioners' table and would withdraw after making their statements.

3. **Mr. Aleksaev** (Russian Federation) said that he appreciated the information provided by the Chair. His delegation had raised the issue in the chamber to ensure that all Committee members received a transparent explanation of the status of those petitioners. He requested that the official documentation of the Committee be amended to reflect any necessary corrections.

Question of Western Sahara (continued) (A/C.4/73/7)

4. **Mr. Omar** (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario)) said that, despite Security Council and General Assembly resolutions condemning the actions of Morocco and urging it to withdraw from the Territory, the continued presence of Morocco in Western Sahara constituted an occupation, under which human rights had been violated and natural resources plundered. The ongoing consideration of the issue by the Committee was a testament to the fact that the inalienable rights of the Western Saharan people were non-negotiable. The United Nations had a responsibility towards those people. The Frente Polisario remained ready to engage in direct negotiations to achieve a solution to the dispute.

5. **Mr. Kadyautumbe** (Zimbabwe) said that he wished to know what the Frente Polisario thought of the fact that, even though the occurrence of human rights violations in Western Sahara had been confirmed by the United Nations and human rights organizations, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was the only United Nations peacekeeping mission that did not monitor human rights.

6. **Mr. Omar** (Frente Polisario) said that the human rights violations committed by the occupying Power in Western Sahara had been well documented by the international community and should be condemned by the Committee.

7. **Ms. Baez**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that no occupying Power should be allowed to forsake the residents of a Territory under its control. If the Moroccan Government truly wished to encourage development in Western Sahara, it would be working with the people; instead, it had divided up the Territory, leaving some areas outside all government control, and withdrawn from the African Union following the recognition by that body of the "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic". As the independence of the "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic" was recognized by the majority of African States, the people of Western Sahara should be permitted to govern the land as they saw fit, and Morocco, rather than exploiting the resources of the Territory, should respect the decisions of the Territorial government.

8. **Mr. Arkoukou** (Free Western Sahara), speaking as a Sahrawi activist, said that a dangerous demographic shift was under way in Western Sahara. In contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Morocco, whose sovereignty over Western Sahara had never been recognized internationally, had been pursuing an

extensive settlement policy in the Territory with a view to changing its demographic make-up in anticipation of a referendum on self-determination. Young Moroccan settlers, encouraged by their relatives to join them in the Territory, were entitled to Moroccan identification cards bearing the symbol allocated to the Territory once they reached maturity. As a result, population growth in Western Sahara was far higher than in Moroccan regions, having increased six-fold over a period of 40 years, according to a series of censuses.

9. **Mr. Hormatallah** (Dakhla-Oued Eddahab region in Western Sahara), speaking as a tribe member from the Dakhla-Oued Eddahab region, said that, contrary to some claims, residents of the Saharan provinces did not live in poverty. Conversely, according to the latest report by the Moroccan Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Laâyoune-Sakia al Hamra region had the highest average annual individual income in Morocco, and two of the three regions in the Moroccan Sahara had an average individual income of double that in the Fès-Meknès region, despite the reputation of the latter as the wealthiest and most economically active in the country. The rapid development and foreign investment enjoyed by the Sahara region was the result of major investment projects implemented by the Moroccan Government. Opponents of Morocco, reluctant to accept that fact, continued to spread misinformation about the economic well-being of the region.

10. **Mr. Sassi** (Skc, Inc.) said that the Sahrawi people were the victims of both the military occupation by Morocco and of the colonialism in another form perpetuated by certain European powers. On multiple occasions, the Court of Justice of the European Union had issued rulings confirming that Western Sahara was a separate Territory from Morocco and that its inclusion under the proposed fishing agreement between Morocco and the European Union violated international law, in particular the principle of self-determination. In doing so, the Court had dismissed any claims of sovereignty by Morocco over Western Sahara, rejected the opinion of the European Union that Morocco exercised de facto control over the Territory, and made the validity of all agreements on the use of the natural resources of the Territory dependent on the consent of the Western Saharan people.

11. In an attempt to dilute the power of those rulings, however, the European Commission had held pseudo-consultations with the local population, in which mainly Moroccan settlers had participated. Local non-governmental organizations had refused to take part, citing the lack of transparency and the biased position of the European Commission.

12. **Mr. Baqai** (Westminster College, Missouri) said that the United Nations needed to deliver on its promises to uphold the right to self-determination of the Western Saharan people in light of the 1975 advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice that Morocco held no sovereignty over Western Sahara and that there was therefore no impediment to implementing General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). Although it had occasionally shown willingness to negotiate, Morocco had failed repeatedly to uphold its promises in that regard, whereas the Frente Polisario — the lawful political voice of the people of Western Sahara — had made genuine concessions with a view to resolving the conflict. Despite the various United Nations Security Council resolutions that expressed explicit support for a referendum on self-determination, including resolution 621 (1988), no progress had been made in that regard for a long time. Concerted efforts were therefore needed to ensure that a fair and impartial referendum was held.

13. **Ms. López Bermejo** (European Parliament) said that it was regrettable that the proposed new trade and fishing agreements between the European Union and Morocco included Western Sahara within the territory of Morocco, despite rulings by the European Court of Justice to the contrary, in which the Court had stated that the Saharan people — represented by the Frente Polisario — should decide how their lands and waters were managed. By supporting the Moroccan occupation of the Territory, the European Commission had chosen to ignore those rulings, thereby undermining the work of the United Nations, ignoring the rights of the Sahrawi people and the need for a resolution to the conflict, and threatening the validity of United Nations resolutions and international law. Furthermore, despite their responsibilities towards the Western Saharan people, European Union member States such as France and Spain continued to support such action.

14. Condemning the ill-treatment of political prisoners and the dispersal of the Sahrawis into refugee camps and Moroccan-occupied areas, she urged the Security Council to support the negotiations process in good faith and without prior conditions, in line with its resolutions to that effect. The mandate of MINURSO should also be expanded, contingent upon efforts to ensure its impartiality and independence. The international community had a duty to support such negotiations.

15. **Ms. Sureda i Martí** (Intergrupo "Paz Y Solidaridad Con El Pueblo Saharaui"), speaking as a parliamentary representative of the Balearic Islands, said that she had witnessed in person the state of hopelessness in which many Sahrawi refugees lived as a result of the decades-long failure of national and international organizations to

uphold their responsibilities to those people. Morocco continued to plunder the natural resources of Western Sahara, despite rulings handed down by the European Court of Justice stating that Western Sahara did not form part of Morocco and that any agreement concerning its natural resources must be approved by the legitimate government, the Frente Polisario. In the Balearic Islands, civil society activists had attempted to prevent the import of sand from Western Sahara, but their efforts had been thwarted. Furthermore, Sahrawi political prisoners were being denied their fundamental rights and deprived of justice. Prosecutors had admitted that individuals were being brought to trial solely for their political beliefs, without any evidence of criminal activity, and that torture was used to extract confessions.

16. **Ms. Seida** (Laayoun-Sakia Al Hamra region) said that she had been elected vice-chair of the Laâyoune-Sakia al Hamra region through free and transparent elections, the integrity of which had been verified by international observers. Rejecting those elections, the Frente Polisario claimed to be the sole representative of the Saharan people and sought to exploit regional geopolitical circumstances to gain international attention. Although it had attempted to claim the recent rulings of the European Court of Justice as a victory, a representative of the European Union had correctly noted that the rulings did not grant the Frente Polisario any rights over the region, that the fishing agreement between Morocco and the European Union remained valid, and that the European Union could conclude no such agreements with the Saharan region, as that region had no legal status and was not recognized by any European Union member State. Furthermore, angered by the terms used by the European Union to describe the Saharan region and population, the Frente Polisario sought instead to impose its chosen terminology, which did not reflect the reality of the situation in the Moroccan Sahara.

17. **Mr. Ayach** (Foum El Oued commune), highlighting the hypocrisy of the positions held by certain States members of the African Union regarding the Saharan issue, said that although the African Union officially recognized Western Sahara, only one third of its member States did so. Despite being a minority, those States wanted the African Union to play a role in resolving the conflict, including by ensuring the right to self-determination of the Saharan people. Given that no referendum had yet been held on establishing an independent State, however, such a State could not yet be considered to exist. States that recognized the entity should therefore withdraw their recognition and await the results of such a referendum. Further evidence of that hypocrisy was the fact that, while those States supported the right of the Saharan people to self-determination, they spoke out against peoples in European regions that sought independence. The real aim of those States was to ignore the legitimate historical rights of Morocco and hinder development in the region.

18. **Mr. El Baihi** (Observatoire du Sahara pour la paix, la democratie et des droits de l'homme) said that, although the Human Rights Council had once again requested a census of the inhabitants of the Tindouf camps, neither the Frente Polisario nor the State that had established that movement would allow it to take place, knowing that the population figures that they had supplied were far higher than the actual population size. The European Union, aware of this deception, had chosen to provide humanitarian aid for only 90,000 persons, rather than the 160,000 claimed to live in the camps, and had resisted all attempts by Algeria to obtain additional aid. The Frente Polisario had exaggerated the size of the Tindouf population in an attempt to convince the international community that it was the legitimate representative of the Saharan people. It also sought to profit from the unlawful sale of surplus aid. Morocco would be unable to find an acceptable solution to the situation until it could negotiate with Algeria, which should be held responsible for all human rights violations committed in its territory.

19. **Mr. Dahi** (Laâyoune), speaking as a Saharan citizen and member of the Department of Employment in Laâyoune city, highlighted the great efforts made by Morocco to provide employment for tens of thousands of young Saharans and improve economic and social conditions in the region. Various civil-society organizations and associations worked in a variety of fields across the Saharan region, and the Moroccan Government relied on those groups to ensure that the daily needs of the population were met. The 2005 National Human Development Initiative facilitated direct cooperation with civil-society actors, who played a key role in developing proposals for human development projects, assessing and maximizing the impact of activities and guaranteeing the transparency of the development programme within a methodological framework of creative government practices.

20. **Mr. El Ouali** (Association 9 Mars) said that certain parties, lacking evidence to support their arguments, were spinning lies in an attempt to deceive voters and gain public sympathy. The Frente Polisario, for example, claimed that their non-existent Saharan republic had been recognized by 80 States, whereas in reality only 32 countries still did so, the remainder having withdrawn recognition after realizing that they had been duped. No member of the Security Council,

nor any State in North America or Europe, recognized the entity. Furthermore, the African Union was the only regional or international organization to recognize it, having been forced into doing so.

21. **Ms. Vilaret I González**, speaking in her personal capacity as a Member of Parliament for the Balearic Islands, said that the human, political and economic rights of the Western Saharan people were being gravely undermined. Morocco should respect international law and human rights, re-establish the functions of MINURSO and accept the Peace Plan for Self-Determination of the People of Western Sahara.

22. The international community should support a referendum on self-determination for the Western Saharan people. Regardless of its immigration and economic policies, the European Union had a duty to defend international law, in particular the recent rulings of the European Court of Justice, which had reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Frente Polisario and reminded the international community that Western Sahara was not part of Morocco.

23. Spain had moral, historical and de jure responsibilities towards Western Sahara, including those related to the completion of the decolonization process. All political parties in the Balearic Islands unanimously condemned Morocco for undermining human rights and delaying the adoption of the Peace Plan, and urged the Spanish State to recognize the Frente Polisario and the "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic" and actively support the right of the Sahrawi people to self-determination. A referendum on self-determination was the only way to end the conflict.

24. **Mr. Yara** (Laayoune Online) said that a number of false allegations had been made against the Sahrawi people. Claims that they were growing illegal drugs were implausible, as Western Sahara was a desert environment. In reality, those drugs were grown in the Moroccan Atlas Mountains. Furthermore, no Sahrawi person, whether in the refugee camps or the occupied Territory, had ever been found to have been involved in terrorist activities. Refuting the claims that residents of the occupied Territory had the right to vote in elections, he asserted that only voters whom election candidates paid to vote were permitted to exercise that right. He dedicated the remainder of his allocated time to remembering Ahmed Boukhari, who had passed away earlier in 2018.

25. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea), resuming the general debate and speaking on behalf of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, said that the road to achieving agreement on a referendum on self-determination for New Caledonia had been long and challenging. All parties should therefore proceed with care and maintain dialogue to ensure the successful conduct of the referendum, as the situation in New Caledonia remained prone to rapid change. The Group welcomed the commitment and good faith demonstrated by all parties in addressing outstanding issues related to the self-determination process.

26. While welcoming the improvements made to the electoral system used in the administering Power and the Territory, the Group remained concerned that some Kanak voters had not yet been registered, and called for greater cultural sensitivity to ensure that disaffected voters did not become a source of instability. The Group also requested the general publication of the internal report of the United Nations electoral experts deployed to provide assistance regarding the special electoral rolls for provincial elections and the referendum.

27. Noting that the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs had been invited as an international observer for the referendum, the Group asked what role the Division would play, and suggesting that deploying select members of the Special Committee on decolonization would be more useful, particularly at a time when efforts were being made to improve the transparency and accountability of the United Nations.

28. To ensure that the outcome of the referendum was respected by all parties, the political and electoral processes needed to be transparent, fair and credible. Regardless of the outcome, New Caledonia should remain on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, in accordance with the Nouméa Accord, which provided for multiple referendums. In addition, the process for the transfer of powers and competencies as defined in the Accord should be respected.

29. Highlighting its appreciation for the valuable conclusions and recommendations issued by the second United Nations Visiting Mission, the Group reiterated its commitment to working with all parties concerned to implement the Accord and build the human resource and institutional capacities of New Caledonia. It also expressed gratitude to France for its positive engagement with all parties regarding the future of the Territory.

30. Speaking in his national capacity on the question of French Polynesia, he said that, while his country recognized the competing interests of the various political parties in the Territory, only the people of French Polynesia had the right to decide its future. Papua New Guinea encouraged peaceful dialogue in pursuit of a solution. On the question of Tokelau, Papua New Guinea commended both parties for engaging constructively with regard to the self-determination

process, which served as a positive example for other Non-Self-Governing Territories. Papua New Guinea reaffirmed its commitment to achieving the emancipation of all Non-Self-Governing Territories in line with the principle of self-determination.

31. **Mr. Simon-Michel** (France) said that his country was sparing no effort to ensure the success of the upcoming referendum in New Caledonia. During its second Visiting Mission to New Caledonia in four years, members of the Special Committee had personally witnessed the socioeconomic, political and educational measures taken to implement the Nouméa Accord in line with its own recommendations, including the expansion of an educational campaign on the consequences of the referendum and the adoption of measures to guarantee the security of electoral meetings, voting stations and the transportation of voting slips.

32. As part of its preparations for the referendum, France had hosted another United Nations expert mission to observe the preparation of the special electoral rolls for provincial elections and the referendum. It had also requested that the campaign and the vote be monitored by experts, and that a coordination mission be conducted to facilitate the deployment of international observers. Every step had been taken to ensure that all eligible voters were registered, including by making preparations to allow changes to be made to the electoral roll on the day of the vote itself.

33. On the question of French Polynesia, France hoped that its inclusion on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be reviewed in light of the wishes of the French Polynesian people, who, during local elections in 2013, had voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining an autonomous territory of France.

34. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that it was regrettable that colonialism continued to prevail, despite the deadlines set by the United Nations for its eradication. Cuba commended the efforts of the Special Committee to that end and urged the United Nations to continue its work in that area. Recalling that the Special Committee had repeatedly reaffirmed the right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination, she stated that, contrary to the picture that the United States Government sought to present, Puerto Rico had not yet recovered from the devastation wrought by hurricanes Irma and Maria. The United States Government had released only a small proportion of the relief funds allocated by its Congress, only 12.5 per cent of which would have a direct impact on the Puerto Rican economy.

35. Her Government defended the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and reiterated its support for the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to find a mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara, in particular through the latest round of unconditional dialogue to be held between the two parties. Cuba also unrestrictedly supported the legitimate right of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute relating to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which were part of Argentine territory. A negotiated, just and definitive solution to that dispute should be found as soon as possible. The two parties should refrain from any unilateral acts that could introduce modifications in the situation of the Islands while the negotiation process was under way.

36. Condemning the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the associated human rights violations and war crimes committed against the Palestinian people, the Cuban Government called for urgent measures to ensure the application of international and humanitarian law. Cuba supported a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. Regrettably, the United Nations had thus far failed in its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people.

37. Cuba called for ever-greater efforts to educate the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories about their right to self-determination and to raise awareness among the international community of the importance of supporting such processes. In that connection, it was concerning that some administering Powers had failed to meet their responsibilities to provide information on Territories under their control.

38. Cuba continued to collaborate with Non-Self-Governing Territories, in particular by hosting graduate students from those Territories at State educational facilities. The Government remained committed to ending colonialism and believed that, while even one Territory remained under colonial rule, the work of the Committee could not be considered complete.

39. **Mr. Carazo Zeledón** (Costa Rica) said that, although the move away from colonialism had been one of the most significant changes of the 21st century, it was regrettable that some peoples still did not enjoy the right to self-determination. Costa Rica remained a firm supporter of the Committee, which it hoped would continue to seek suitable measures to implement all relevant decisions and instruments. The regional seminars and Visiting Missions that the Committee

carried out contributed to the dissemination and evaluation of information about the situation in each Non-Self-Governing Territory.

40. Costa Rica recognized the sovereign rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The legitimate Argentine claim had been supported by various General Assembly resolutions. Costa Rica commended Argentina and the United Kingdom for the constructive progress made in various respects and urged them to continue in that vein with a view to achieving a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute. Costa Rica also supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to find a fair, sustainable and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara.

41. As sovereignty and democracy were inextricably linked, the United Nations should seek efficient, sustainable and peaceful solutions to international conflicts that upheld the values of democracy, human rights, self-determination, sovereignty and justice. Colonialism posed an obstacle to international economic cooperation and socioeconomic and cultural development and undermined the principle of universal peace. It was therefore right that such practices were being put to an end.

42. **Mr. Hawke** (New Zealand) said that the recent developments in the relationship between his Government and Tokelau reflected the new approach that the Government had adopted to that important issue, through which it hoped to build stronger partnerships with its Pacific neighbours.

43. Over the next four years, New Zealand planned to invest 86 million New Zealand dollars ($NZ) in Tokelau to improve the health and education systems, reduce the travel time between the atolls, provide faster and more reliable Internet service, improve governance, transparency and democratic practices, strengthen the public financial management capacity and maximize revenue from fishing in a sustainable manner. It was also helping to build resilience to climate change, in particular by reducing the risks of coastal inundation and constructing a weather station; such efforts were all the more important given that Tokelau, as a Territory, could not gain access to sources of global climate finance available to many countries. Tokelau also regularly played a role in international climate negotiations, and it was now covered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. New Zealand remained committed to building the capacity and confidence of Tokelau to self-govern. It welcomed the attention placed on the issue by the Committee and would continue to provide assistance in that regard.

44. **Mr. Ten-Pow** (Guyana) said that, although the United Nations had made great strides towards ending colonialism, its work would not be complete until all Non-Self-Governing Territories enjoyed the right to self-determination, which was obstructed only by the continued existence of colonialism. Efforts should be made to ensure that all peoples enjoyed the same fundamental rights to which they were entitled, equally and without distinction.

45. Expressing support for the measures adopted as part of the Second and Third International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism, his Government urged all administering Powers to work closely with the United Nations on finalizing a programme of work and to maintain dialogue with the Special Committee and the peoples of the Territories under their control with a view to achieving the goals of those initiatives.

46. Commending the work of the Secretary General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, the Guyanese Government emphasized that ensuring the well-being of the Sahrawi people should be one of the main motivating factors for achieving a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political settlement. Encouraged by recent progress in that regard, it called on the interested parties to approach the next round of negotiations in a constructive spirit and to uphold the provisions of the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

47. **Mr. Tenya** (Peru) said that his country had always strongly supported all efforts to eradicate colonialism, in line with the mandate set out in the Charter and various General Assembly resolutions. Although significant progress had been made, Peru urged the United Nations to redouble its efforts to eliminate colonialism completely. A strong political will and a case-by-case approach were fundamental to achieving that goal. Each case should be subject to close and constant evaluation involving direct and regular contact between the Special Committee and the affected parties. Administering Powers needed to work closely with the Special Committee in that regard and to take all necessary steps to accelerate the process of decolonization.

48. A matter of particular importance to Peru was the case of the Malvinas Islands, where historical and legal circumstances precluded the possibility of exercise of the right to self-determination. Peru had consistently supported the legitimate sovereignty rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime

areas, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). Negotiation was the only means of resolving that issue, and Argentina and the United Kingdom should resume talks with a view to finding a peaceful, constructive and lasting solution to the dispute, guided by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. They should refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the existing situation of the Islands, in line with General Assembly resolution 31/49.

49. **Mr. Touangaï** (Central African Republic) said that his country remained committed to eradicating colonialism. While urging the Committee to take further steps to support the decolonization process and promote sustainable growth in all Non-Self-Governing Territories, he also cautioned against adopting radical positions that could have unintended consequences.

50. A lasting solution was required to resolve the dispute in the Moroccan Sahara and ensure the stability and security of the Sahel region. Expressing support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara in that regard and for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 2414 (2018), the Central African Republic called on all neighbouring States, in particular Algeria, to contribute to the process and participate in negotiations. The Central African Republic commended Morocco for its willingness to cooperate, in particular in allowing the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to visit the Sahara region in 2018, and for its efforts to promote human rights and to develop the region in line with international norms. Welcoming the upcoming negotiations and commending Morocco its willingness to participate in them, his Government remained concerned by the situation of refugees in the Tindouf camps and called for a census to be conducted. It also wished to assure the international community that its position on the issue of the Saharan region did not adversely affect its relations with other countries in Africa.

51. Rising immigration had become a priority issue for the international community. As a result of the conflict in the Central African Republic, many individuals were internally displaced or living as refugees. His Government called on its partners to develop new approaches to repatriation and reintegration, including by providing employment, in order to support its national strategy in that regard. In that connection, it welcomed the planned Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

52. The Central African Republic was conscious of the need to promote human rights and a culture of peace in order to ensure national unity, and of the importance of engaging citizens in discussions on the meaning of citizenship and the principles of secularism as set out in the Constitution. In that context, the Government had recently been able to restore the national courts and resume criminal proceedings.

53. The Central African Republic firmly condemned the growing problem of human trafficking. It intended to draw up a national action plan to combat networks trafficking in humans, drugs and weapons, and to protect victims of trafficking.

54. **Ms. Ferreira** (Angola) said that her country fully supported the efforts of the United Nations to end colonialism, the existence of which ran contrary to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Angola stood in solidarity with all peoples still fighting for their right to self-determination and independence.

55. Recalling the responsibility of the General Assembly to ensure the decolonization of Western Sahara and promote the sovereignty of the Sahrawi people, she called attention to the various decisions of the African Union on that issue, including that taken at the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Summit, and expressed her Government's support for the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to engage both parties in negotiations. Her Government also called on the Special Committee to conduct an official visit to both the occupied and liberated areas of Western Sahara and to the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria to ensure that human rights were being upheld.

56. Decolonization could not be achieved without the engagement of all parties in the United Nations peace process and the adoption of political and legal solutions acceptable to all parties. Angola supported the implementation of all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Western Sahara with the aim of achieving a peaceful solution of the issue.

57. **Mr. Al-Maawda** (Qatar) said that, given the threat posed by colonialism to peace, human rights and democracy, one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations had been ensuring the independence of many former colonies. The Declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all General Assembly resolutions on decolonization played an essential role in ending colonialism, foreign domination, racial discrimination and the denial of human rights. Qatar encouraged the consensual and peaceful settlement of

territorial disputes, which could be achieved only through dialogue and the consideration of each situation on a case-by-case basis.

58. Qatar firmly supported the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to live in an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with all international instruments calling for the withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territory and all occupied Arab lands.

59. On the question of Western Sahara, he emphasized the importance of dialogue and negotiation in achieving a lasting solution. Qatar supported all efforts to reach a political settlement in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and in a manner that preserved the sovereignty of the Moroccan State. A solution to the issue would help ensure the stability and security of the region and foster cooperation between neighbouring States. In that connection, Qatar highlighted the importance of the self-rule initiative proposed by Morocco at its first summit with the Arab States of the Gulf in 2016 as a basis for settling the dispute. The General Assembly should support all efforts to complete the political process and achieve a consensus-based solution.

60. **Ms. Hashim** (Iraq) said that the Declaration was a source of inspiration for all advocates of freedom. Iraq supported the elimination of colonialism and racial discrimination and the implementation of human rights under the Declaration, which should remain a priority of the United Nations until a resolution had been found for all Non-Self-Governing Territories.

61. As a member of the Special Committee, Iraq regretted that certain administering Powers did not participate in meetings of the Special Committee as mandated by United Nations resolutions, given that such Powers had a duty to keep the Special Committee abreast of developments in the Territories under their control and to facilitate the conduct of Visiting Missions. Although the situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory was unique, all administering Powers had official responsibilities towards the people in the Territories under their control, which included a duty to protect their natural resources, provide humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters and build emergency-response capabilities. Specialized agencies and foreign investors made valuable contributions to improving living conditions in Non-Self-Governing Territories, provided that they worked in consultation with local populations. It was essential that all economic assistance provided to such Territories was carried out with the main objective of strengthening their economies and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

62. Iraq encouraged Visiting Missions as an effective method of examining the conditions in which each population lived and its relationship with the administering Power. Having participated in the Visiting Mission to New Caledonia in March 2018, it commended the spirit of cooperation shown by United Nations staff and by France, which had enabled the Mission to establish a clear picture of the current situation. Iraq welcomed the atmosphere of peaceful coexistence and democracy in New Caledonia, and highlighted the efforts of local authorities to uphold the Nouméa Accord, in particular with regard to the conduct of a referendum. Iraq remained firmly committed to working with other members of the Special Committee with a view to eliminating colonialism in all remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

63. **Mr. Sylvester** (United Kingdom), replying to the statements made by the representatives of Costa Rica and Peru, said that the United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas of both Territories, nor about the Falkland Islanders' right to self-determination, as that principle was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in article 1 of the two International Covenants on human rights, by virtue of which they freely determined their political status and freely pursued their economic, social and cultural development. None of the regional statements of diplomatic support for sovereignty negotiations invoked by Argentina modified or diluted the obligation of nations to respect the legally binding principle of self-determination. Therefore, no dialogue on sovereignty was possible unless the Falkland Islanders so wished. The 2013 referendum, in which 99.8 per cent of those who voted wanted to maintain their current status as an Overseas Territory of the United Kingdom, had sent a clear message that the people of the Islands did not want dialogue on sovereignty. Argentina should respect those wishes.

64. His Government's relationship with the Falkland Islands, as with all of its Overseas Territories, was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the rights of the people of each Territory to determine their own future. Argentina continued to deny that such fundamental human rights applied to the people of the Falkland Islands, and also to act in ways that went against the principles of the Charter.

65. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina), replying to the remarks of the representative of the United Kingdom regarding the Malvinas Islands, reiterated the statements made in recent months by the President of Argentina to the General Assembly and by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship to the Special Committee. His Government reaffirmed that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of Argentine national territory that, having been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two parties, which was recognized by various international organizations.

66. That illegal occupation had led the General Assembly to adopt resolution 2065 (XX) and nine subsequent resolutions, all of which recognized the existence of the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands and called upon the two countries to resume negotiations with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute as soon as possible. For its part, the Special Committee had adopted several resolutions, most recently in June 2018, and the General Assembly of the Organization of American States had also adopted a new statement on the issue in similar terms the same month.

67. The right to self-determination of peoples did not apply in the case of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The illegitimate "referendum" held there had been a unilateral exercise that in no way changed the colonial essence of the question; it could not resolve the sovereignty dispute and had no effect on the legitimate rights of Argentina or the work of the Special Committee.

68. Any attempt to allow the British population on the islands to arbitrate a dispute to which their own country was a party distorted the right of self-determination of peoples, given that the situation did not involve a people in the sense of international law. The interests of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands were adequately addressed by resolutions of the General Assembly and by the Constitution of Argentina. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

69. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he rejected the terminology used by the representative of Qatar to refer to the Persian Gulf. The term "Persian Gulf" was the time-honoured name for that body of water, as supported by historical evidence, and it enjoyed international recognition, including from the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.